

## Notes on the History of Pottawattamie County No. 4

D. C. Bloomer

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## NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY.

BY D. C. BLOOMER.

## No. 4.

(Continued from page 51.)

THE first number of the *Council Bluffs Chronotype* was issued on the 13th day of December, 1855, by Folsom & Maynard — William W. Maynard, editor. It was published for about two years and a half — Mr. Maynard continuing editor for about one year, assisted, for a portion of the time, by Mr. A. J. Mackey, a young man of much ability and promise as a writer. In looking over the files of the first volume, I notice abundant evidence of that racy and pungent style which has since placed Mr. Maynard in the front rank of the editorial fraternity of the state. J. E. Johnson was at that time in charge of the *Bugle*, the only other paper in the county, and many sharp conflicts passed between them in their editorial columns. The *Chronotype* was whig, or anti-Nebraska, in politics, while the *Bugle* sustained the administration and the then bitter contest going on in Kansas, and the question of the admission or non-admission of slavery into the territories furnished abundant topics for editorial conflict and discussion.

On the 5th of February, 1855, an election was held in Council Bluffs for city officers, under the charter granted by the legislature in 1853 — no election having been held in 1854. At this election the following officers were chosen: Mayor, C. E. Stone; recorder, C. W. Boyers; treasurer, B. R. Pegram; marshal, A. F. Thompson; assessor, G. A. Robinson; councilmen — first ward, J. B. Stutsman, J. B. Lewis, W. Hepner; second ward, J. P. Casady, R. P. Snow, S. S. Bayless; third ward, J. A. Jackson, Milton Rogers, W. J. Cooper. Messrs. Snow and Hepner declined to serve, and J. D. Test and J. E. Johnson were appointed in their places. It was said, probably with truth, that the above

candidates mainly owed their election to the influence of a lodge of "know-nothings," which, it was charged, had been established in the town that spring. Among the appointments of city officers made by the council, were the following: City engineer, Thomas Tosteven; city attorney, R. L. Douglass; city supervisor, H. D. Harl. A tax, for city purposes, of five mills was levied. The mayor recommended, early in the year, that a system of public improvements should be commenced, and that the bonds of the city should be issued to pay the expense; but very little was done towards carrying out these recommendations, and no city bonds were issued this year. A few ordinances were passed, money enough collected to pay the officers and make some necessary repairs on the streets. Mr. Stone received \$100 for his services as mayor for the year. The board of health consisted of Drs. Honn, Malcolm, and Shoemaker, but no contagious diseases prevailed, and their labors were quite light.

The township of Knox was organized in February, 1855. It is situated in the northeastern part of the county, having previously formed a part of Macedonia township. It had been early settled by the Mormons, but about this time it received a considerable Gentile population. Rev. John Wilson, a pioneer Methodist minister, came to the vicinity this year, and was a noted character throughout all that region. John A. Sinclair, Benjamin True, John A. Stickney, and A. M. Battelle were also among the first settlers. The village sites of Wooster and Newtown were both platted and recorded this year. They were situated on sections 21 and 22, in township 77, range 39, adjoining each other, on a beautiful tract of land just east of the Nishnabotna river, and near the south end of Lewin's Grove. Quite a settlement sprang up at this point, a school house was built, a store opened, and a blacksmith shop established. Here, also, Parson Wilson preached to the people the pure doctrines of the gospel, occasionally extending his ministrations up and down the river for a long distance, uniting the young

people in marriage and burying the dead. Dr. S. M. Ballard and Samuel Knepper owned large tracts of fine land in this township, and were among the proprietors of the proposed village of Wooster.

The warm and pleasant winter of 1854-55 was succeeded by a dry and hot spring. Very little rain fell until late in May, and the grass on the prairies was slow in making its appearance. The Missouri river was unusually low all the spring, and merchants were unable to receive their supply of goods until about the first of July. Merchandise and groceries of all kinds were very scarce in the place, and the most ordinary articles of common use in families were in great demand, and often could not be purchased at any price. The emigration, in its canvas-covered wagons, began to make its appearance early in the season, but was detained on the Missouri river, waiting for supplies and the growth of grass on the plains, until the beginning of June. About that time, also, the rains began to fall, and soon the prairies were covered with their beautiful summer mantle of green. In July the river began to swell, and soon its banks were nearly full, bringing a goodly number of steamboats up the river, whose decks were crowded with freight and passengers. At that early day the arrival of a steamboat from St. Louis was an event of considerable importance, and people in great numbers hastened to the landing, either to welcome friends, receive goods, or feast their eyes upon a messenger from the outer world. On such occasions the bar of the boat was well patronized, and very frequently the day closed with a dance in the spacious cabin, at which the elite of Council Bluffs and Omaha were present, and joined in the festivities.

Early in the summer of 1855 the work of building the brick block in Council Bluffs, afterwards known as Empire Block, was commenced. It was the first block of brick buildings erected on the Missouri slope above St. Joseph. The proprietors were S. S. Bayliss, Milton Tootle, James A. Jackson, R. P. Snow, George Dougherty, and Mrs.

Leonora Amy. It was situated in the lower part of the city, nearly opposite the Pacific House, fronting on Broadway, and extending from Main to Pearl street, and consisted of four fine store rooms, each twenty-five feet wide by eighty feet in depth, and three stories high. The work went steadily on during the fall, and the buildings were gotten ready for occupancy during the following winter. The firm of George Doughty & Co. was the first to move into the new block, followed soon after by the well known "Elephant Store," James A. Jackson & Co., proprietors, who occupied the room at the corner of Broadway and Main streets. The completion of each of these two buildings was commemorated in the way usual in those days—that is, by a regular old-fashioned dance. The remaining two store rooms were not occupied until the following spring, when one of them was filled with hardware by C. J. Fox, and the other with merchandise, by a new firm, consisting of Edward McBride and William S. Bowen.

Just about the time the above block was commenced, Mr. Lysander W. Babbitt, at that time holding the office of register of United States land office, began the erection of a brick block in the eastern part of the city, in connection with the well known mercantile firm of Stutsman & Donnell. Two brick buildings were erected, completed, and occupied during the fall, Mr. Babbitt going into the mercantile business in connection with Mr. Wm. H. Robinson. These buildings were known as the "Phoenix Block." The register's office was removed into this block early in 1856, from its old quarters, near the Pacific House. Mr. Babbitt had previously, in 1854, erected a fine residence in the extreme eastern part of the city, which has since been enlarged and surrounded by beautiful grounds, filled with all kinds of fruits, and is still (in 1872) occupied by him.

On the 27th of August, 1855, Mr. Sherman Goss, of Rockford township, was killed in a claim fight which occurred on that day at Fort Calhoun, in Nebraska. He was penetrated by two bullets, and died almost instantly. He was a highly

esteemed and worthy citizen of the county, and his loss was deeply lamented. Mr. H. C. Purple, another old resident of the county, but at that time sojourning in Omaha, was also seriously wounded in the same affray.

On the 15th of February following (1856), Mr. J. B. Wynn, an old resident of Council Bluffs, was killed at Elkhorn, in Nebraska, by a man named Tabor, in consequence of some difficulty growing out of a contested claim at that place. Tabor was arrested in Council Bluffs, and committed, after a protracted examination before Esquire Kynett, for delivery to the Nebraska authorities, but released on *habeas corpus* by Judge Riddle, after which he immediately left the country.

During this, and several subsequent years, the Indians had free access to the streets of the town, a privilege of which they availed themselves in large numbers. Omahas and Pawnees predominated among these tawny nations of the plains, and their visits to the inhabitants were made in that free and easy style which showed that they stood not on ceremony, either in coming or going. They would open doors and walk into houses with most astonishing coolness, and when they could not do this they would plant themselves before the windows and watch the movements of the inmates, to their own entire satisfaction. Francis Guittar at this time kept a so-called Indian grocery on the corner of Main and Broadway, and around this his Indian friends would gather in great numbers — shooting at dimes, jumping, running, and singing, and sometimes treating the miscellaneous crowd that gathered around them to a regular war dance. Guittar had passed many years among them as a fur trader, and could, therefore, speak their language with facility.

On one occasion, in the summer of 1855, the streets of the town presented a most remarkable scene. The Omahas, having received their annual payments from the government in gold, came to Council Bluffs to buy horses. Very soon the intelligence spread over the town, and in a little while

almost every horse and pony in the place was on the streets, for sale. The Indians were pretty good at a bargain when horse-flesh was to be bought, and trading went on actively all day. Horses and ponies were seen flying through the streets in all directions, with red or white riders. Gold was the only medium of exchange that passed current, and eagles\* were traded for horse-flesh in large amounts; and when night came the Indians retired to the bottoms with their horses, while their former owners were engaged in counting up their gains.

Early in 1855 a division of the Sons of Temperance was established at Council Bluffs, of which Thomas Tostevin was the first presiding officer, and T. P. Treynor, Frank Street, and George H. Smith were prominent members. Late in the fall of the same year a lodge of Good Templars was organized, and both of these institutions enjoyed a fair degree of prosperity for several years. They did not, however, make much headway in arresting the sale of intoxicating liquors or in reducing the number of saloons that lined the streets of the town. Drinking, gambling, and Sunday desecration were still far too common, and continued so for several years longer.

On the 21st of July, 1855, a masonic lodge was organized in Council Bluffs, the place of meeting being in Odd Fellows Hall. The first officers were L. L. Bowen, P. J. McMahon, S. H. Riddle, Samuel Knepper, A. W. Hollister, J. C. Fargo, and S. W. Williams. Among the early members were W. C. James, A. V. Larimer, T. H. Benton, jr., Leonard Sears, Rufus Beall, and W. W. Maynard.

During the winter of 1855 a literary association was established, which held regular meetings for several months.

The April election, in 1855, seems to have excited very little interest in the county, and a very light vote was polled — the people's (or anti-administration) ticket receiving a majority of three, seven, and thirteen for the respective state candidates for the offices of register of the state land office and register and commissioner of the Des Moines river im-

provement. I have been unable to find any record of the details of the vote in the county. In Kane township, including Council Bluffs, the total vote was 243. In this township the following local officers were elected: J. F. Moffett, justice of the peace; G. A. Robinson, assessor; W. H. Robinson, clerk; and J. L. Childs, Jeremiah Folsom, and D. B. Clark, trustees. The majority against prohibition in Kane township was 25, and in the county 40.

At the August election of the same year, only county officers were voted for, and party lines were not very stringently drawn. W. D. Turner was elected recorder and treasurer; Thomas Tostevin, county surveyor; John C. Fargo, sheriff; and Joseph Hall, county judge. All of these gentlemen, except the last named, were whigs, and the *Chronotype* brought out a primitive picture of "our coon," accompanied by an amusing notice of the departure of the "low pressure 'Hunkee Democrat'" for Salt river. I can find no record whatever of the details of the vote at this election, either in the county records or in the files of the newspapers then published in the county. In fact, these papers seem, at that time, to have been singularly neglectful of home news—the local column, now forming so prominent a part of every well conducted newspaper, having then not yet come into much prominence. Judge Hall, who was a plain, honest farmer, soon found the duties of his office exceedingly irksome, and he therefore resigned after a few months, and the duties of the office were discharged by A. V. Larimer until the spring election, in April, 1856, when William C. James was elected for the remainder of the term. At this latter election, the other county officers chosen were: Samuel Eggleston, school commissioner, and William R. Reel, drainage commissioner. The vote was very light and very little interest taken in the result.

In February, 1856, the republican party was, for the first time, formally organized in the county, and C. E. Stone, J. T. Baldwin, J. D. Honn, Frank Street, and J. B. Wynn were appointed delegates to the republican state convention.



The political canvass of 1856 was conducted, towards its close, with considerable spirit. Samuel R. <sup>✓</sup>Curtis and Augustus <sup>✓</sup>Hall, the opposing candidates for congress, both visited the county and delivered addresses, as did also several of the candidates for presidential electors. At the August election the whole number of votes was 564, and the democratic majority was 200. A. V. <sup>✓</sup>Larimer was elected representative, J. H. Sherman prosecuting attorney, and F. E. <sup>✓</sup>Welch clerk of the district court. The defeated republican candidates for the same offices were: B. R. <sup>✓</sup>Pegram, George W. <sup>✓</sup>Dodge, and David <sup>✓</sup>De Vol.

At the presidential election, in November, Buchanan received 353 votes, Fremont 259, and Fillmore 85; total, 697 —divided among the six townships of which the county was then composed, as follows: Kane, 408; Rockford, 97; Macedonia, 41; Center, 21; Walnut, 17; and Knox, 14. At the same election D. W. <sup>✓</sup>Price received 40 majority in the county for member of the constitutional convention for the district then composed of nearly the entire northwestern part of Iowa. His competitor for the same office was D. E. <sup>✓</sup>Brainard, of Harrison county.

At the city election in March, 1856, in Council Bluffs, the following city officers were elected: Mayor, D. W. Price; recorder, F. E. Welch; treasurer, J. B. <sup>✓</sup>Stutsman; marshal, H. D. <sup>✓</sup>Harl; assessor, David <sup>✓</sup>De Vol; councilmen — J. E. <sup>✓</sup>Johnson, W. C. <sup>✓</sup>James, and J. B. <sup>✓</sup>Lewis in the first ward; J. D. <sup>✓</sup>Test, James <sup>✓</sup>Orton, and Patrick <sup>✓</sup>Murphy in the second ward; and J. T. <sup>✓</sup>Baldwin, G. A. <sup>✓</sup>Robinson, and D. C. <sup>✓</sup>Bloomer in the third ward. The whole number of votes polled at this election was 202.

On the 14th of April a special election was held, when a proposition was adopted, by a vote of 122 to 4, to borrow \$10,000, to be expended in internal improvements within the city. The money thus raised was almost entirely expended in widening and grading Broadway, then the principal street of the city. and extending westwardly from its commencement, in the valley of Indian creek, to the Mis-

souri river. In addition to the city tax upon property, a special tax, or license, was levied, or imposed, upon lawyers, land agents, physicians, and merchants, as well as upon billiard halls, saloons, &c.; but its collection was found to be very difficult, and the ordinance was repealed in the following year.

During the early part of the winter of 1854-55, the land office in Council Bluffs had been closed, but it was re-opened for the entry of lands on the 5th of February, 1855, and continued open for that purpose until the 31st of May, 1856, when it was closed by order of the secretary of the interior. During this period large quantities of government lands were entered with cash or located with land warrants. The fourteen southwestern counties of Iowa, composing the Council Bluffs land district, were traversed in every direction by land hunters, and all the more desirable locations sought out and entered. The number of professional land agents and land hunters was largely increased, and very little land would have been left after the last date above named, had not the number of entries been limited by Col. Babbitt, the then register of the land office. Especially during the early part of 1856 the rush and the pressure to enter land was unprecedented. The number of entries per day was very large, and, as a consequence, the land agents were all well supplied with business. Early in May the news came of the passage of the law making large donations of public lands in aid of the four proposed lines of railroads across the state of Iowa, with rumors that an order had been, or would soon be, issued for the closing of all the land offices in the state. Then the pressure at the register's office became fiercer than ever, and the clerks were worked day and night to meet the demand for land. Strangely enough, the order for closing the office failed to come to hand until the last day of May, and during that month the total entries at the office reached over 200,000 acres. Then the business, much to the disgust of the land agents and speculators in land warrants, closed, and no more land, ex-

cept by pre-emption, was entered until the re-opening of the office, in the winter of 1858. Fortunate would it have been for Iowa if the homestead law of 1862 could have been enacted ten years earlier, so that its beautiful prairies could have been taken up and occupied as homesteads, instead of falling into the hands, as they have so largely done, of speculators, who now refuse to dispose of them except at large prices — which, in truth, they are compelled to do, in view of the long time they have held the lands, and the heavy taxes they have been required to pay.

During the fall of 1855, and the following winter, a steady stream of land-seekers and fortune-hunters flowed westward into Iowa. The tri-weekly stages of the Western Stage Company were constantly filled with passengers, and the hotels at Council Bluffs were overflowing with guests. The price of lots in the town steadily advanced in value, and new additions to the town plat enlarged greatly the area of the embryo city. The passage of the railroad grant providing for the construction of a road to Council Bluffs, greatly increased this feeling, and by the close of 1856 and the commencement of 1857 the fever of speculation was at its highest point, and town property of every description became enormously enhanced in value. Great expectations were indulged by all classes as to the future prospects of the city as a railroad center. Nor were these views confined to the citizens of Council Bluffs alone. At the celebration of the completion of the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad to Iowa City, early in January, the following was among the toasts drank on the occasion: "*Council Bluffs* — The City of the Hills, from which the iron horse shall soon, at one bound, cross the turbid waters of the Missouri in its course to the Pacific."

Col. Samuel R. Curtis, about the same time, or a little earlier, anticipated the future course of events at the same point. In a letter to the *Keokuk Whig* he said: "Let all the cities of Iowa, including Keokuk, so arrange their railroad lines as to easily connect at Council Bluffs, and here

let all unite in a great trunk line, running west up the broad valley of the Platte; and the emigrant route will soon become the great Pacific route, and the highway of nations." Other far-sighted men took the same view, and it is therefore no wonder that, under the influence of the speculative mania that pervaded the whole west at the time, corner lots, and even outside property, miles away from the business center of the place, were run up to figures that made all sensible men hesitate long before investing their money in this description of property.

On the 23d of July a company of English and Welsh converts to the Mormon faith passed through the county, on their way to Salt Lake City. They conveyed their provisions, clothing, and a few other articles in hand carts, which they slowly dragged over the prairies. A few wagons, for the conveyance of the sick, the infirm, and the heavy baggage, accompanied the caravan, which presented, as it moved over the prairies, a most pitiable and degrading spectacle. Men and women were alike harnessed to carts, and the worn and haggard expressions of the whole company told plainly enough of hopes deferred, and faith, though strong, yet sorely tried. Crossing the river at Florence, they tarried at that point until sometime in September, when they wended their weary way westward, towards the Mecca of their hopes, on the borders of Great Salt Lake. Winter came on early and exceedingly cold, and large numbers of these people were frozen to death on the plains, so that a small moiety only, of these credulous dupes of designing men, ever reached their destination.

Center township was organized on the 23d of June, 1856, from territory taken from Macedonia township. It consisted of township 75, ranges 39, 40, and 41, with a narrow strip taken from the south side of township 76, in the same ranges. Big Grove, in this township, is the largest body of timber in the county, and comprises, in all, about 1,000 acres of timber land. The Nishnabotana passes through the center of the township. The Mormons first occupied

this grove as early as 1847-8. The Gentiles began to come in about the years 1851 and 1852. Joshua C. Layton arrived April 29, 1852, and settled upon a farm on which he still resides, near the eastern limits of the grove. His brother, Joseph Layton, arrived in the vicinity the following year. Jacob Rust was another of the old settlers in the grove, and he still survives, at an advanced age.

The town site of Iola, located near the north end of the grove, in section 1, township 75, range 39, was laid out in 1855, by Thomas Tostevin, Horace Everett, George Reed, and P. J. McMahon. At that early day it was predicted that it would become, at some future day, the capital of a new county; but that day has not yet arrived, although the project for a new county, to be carved out of the eastern end of "Old Pottawattamie," is now being earnestly canvassed.

In the summer of 1856 the writer of these notes visited Center township with B. R. Pegram, then a candidate for the general assembly of the state. A meeting was held in the dwelling of Mr. Hough, who had then just commenced the opening of a farm a little south-east from the grove, and had erected a dwelling of logs for the accommodation of himself and family. It consisted of two distinct buildings, with a covered way, or porch, between them. After the talking and canvassing were over, we proceeded to the residence of Mr. Joshua C. Layton, where we found a wedding had come off that afternoon, the bride being a daughter of Mr. Layton. In the evening the young couple repaired to Joseph Layton's to spend the night, and thus escaped an old-fashioned horning, which came off about midnight, to the infinite disgust of the candidate for legislative honors and his companion. Evidently all the tin horns, tin pans, and brass kettles in the neighborhood were brought into use on the occasion; but the parties for whom the celebration was intended were beyond the hearing of the discordant sounds that greeted Mr. Layton's residence that night.

In July, 1856, another strip of territory, twelve miles long

and six miles wide, comprising government townships 74 and 75, in range 38, in the southeastern part of the county, was organized into a civil township, and called Walnut, from a creek of that name which runs from north to south through its entire length. The East Nishnabotana river also skirts this township on the east, and is lined by a wide belt of excellent timber, while the wide valley through which it flows, together with the adjacent rolling prairies, affords some of the most beautiful farming lands in the county.

Milton P. Black was the first justice of the peace elected in the new township, William E. Van Riper the first clerk, and Edward Dean one of the first township trustees. In addition to the above names, William and Frederick Merwherter, Joseph and Granville Pierson, and Amos West were among the first settlers in this township. The last named person was a soldier in the war of 1812, and received a land warrant from the government, with which he located the land upon which he now resides, at the mature age of eighty-seven years. The first school district was organized, and the first school opened in the township, in 1858.

Hotel accommodations, boarding houses, and dwellings were in great demand during the entire season of 1856. For the week ending May 7, the number of arrivals at the Pacific House was 201, and at the Robinson Hotel 179. People found it very difficult to procure shelter for themselves and families, and prices ranged at high rates on all sides. Rents were thought to be exorbitant by new-comers, and more houses were urgently demanded. Quite a number of these were erected during the latter part of the year. Mr. S. S. Bayliss, towards fall, commenced a four-story addition to the Pacific House, but the early setting-in of winter delayed its completion until towards the beginning of the following spring. Mr. J. M. Palmer began the erection of a new three-story brick block of four buildings this season, and finished it off during the fall and winter. Hagg's Block was erected this year by Mr. Benedict Hagg, who had com-

menced the manufacture of lager beer the previous year. Mr. L. W. Babbitt erected a three-story addition, 120 feet in depth, to the Phoenix Block.

Banking houses were opened this season by Baldwin & Dodge and Henn, Williams, Horton, & Co. Messrs. Thomas Officer and William H. M. Pusey erected a row of frame buildings this fall, on the corner of Broadway and Main streets, in one of which they commenced the business of banking the following spring. These gentlemen also made extensive purchases of property in the town, and erected one or two frame dwellings previous to the setting-in of winter.

A regular line of steamers plied between St. Joseph and Council Bluffs, and through boats from St. Louis made their appearance at the landing quite frequently—the number of arrivals averaged about twenty per month. The Western Stage Company maintained a tri-weekly line of stages across the state, and Mr. Frost ran a line of coaches, also tri-weekly, to St. Joseph. On the 22d of October it was announced, with a great deal of satisfaction, that Parker's express would thereafter make weekly trips across the state.

Up to this time the circulating medium throughout this whole region had been confined almost entirely to the precious metals, and eagles and double eagles were abundant in almost every-body's pockets. Times were good, money plenty, and bank bills the exception, rather than the rule, in all commercial transactions. This year, however, the latter began to make their appearance more fully, and the neighboring territory of Nebraska furnished a most convenient field for their manufacture. A number of charters for banks were granted by the territorial legislature; and Omaha, Florence, De Soto, Nebraska City, Bellevue, and other towns on the west side of the river, had their "institutions," all engaged in the manufacture of their neatly printed promises to pay. These notes gradually worked their way into circulation in Council Bluffs, through the in-

fluence of several citizens interested in the so-called "banks" issuing them, but when the great crash came, in the following year, not a few persons had good reason to remember the days of "wild cat" banking on the Missouri river with anything but pleasant emotions.

The winter of 1856-7 was one of extraordinary severity. It began with a terrible storm on the 2d of December, and continued with almost unrelenting severity until late in the following February. The snow fell to an unprecedented depth in this section of the state, and the cold was often excessive. The roads were frequently blocked up, sometimes for several weeks at a time. A number of persons were frozen to death, or perished from sheer exhaustion, amid the drifting storms on the prairies. Cattle died in great numbers, and the following spring the roads across the state were, in places, lined with their carcasses. Many people were ill prepared for this terrible winter, and, in their rude and poorly protected dwellings, suffered greatly. In Council Bluffs, fuel, at times, was almost impossible to be had, and the poorest quality of soft wood sometimes sold at \$12 to \$15 per cord. Weeks frequently elapsed without the arrival of a mail in the place, and the people were, therefore, entirely cut off from all news from abroad. This, however, was not an unusual circumstance during the suspension of navigation, for I recollect very well that it was about two weeks after the presidential election of 1856 before we could gain any certain information as to the result. Our latest intelligence then came from St. Louis, and the *Republican* and *Democrat* of that city were then as common in our business houses and on our tables as are now the *Tribune* and *Times* of Chicago, or our own daily papers.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



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